

Walking the thin green line



Citizens can make a difference when they call California's hotline Californians Turn in Poachers and Polluters or 1- 888-DFG-CalTIP.

Protected Garibaldi Poached in Southern California

Southern California Warden Christian Corbo received information from CalTIP that some men were illegally collecting sea urchins from the tide pools at White Point Beach in Los Angeles County. The suspect's vehicle was described as a white Chevy van.

Corbo arrived at the beach and located the van. The warden contacted the two male occupants and asked if

By Lt. Liz Schwall

they had been collecting from the tide pools. One of the men said "yes," and allowed Corbo to look in the back of the van. Corbo found assorted dive gear and a cooler that contained 10 sea urchins, two speared spiny lobsters, and four speared, Garibaldi fish. The man in the van explained that the lobster and the Garibaldi had been taken by his friend "Junior" who was still out diving.

About 30 minutes later, "Junior" emerged from the surf wearing dive gear and carrying a mesh bag. The bag contained 25 sea urchins. Corbo asked the man if he had speared the lobster and the Garibaldi. The suspect replied, "Yes." Corbo advised the suspect that the lobster season was closed and even if it had been open, spears were an illegal method of take. Corbo also let the man know that the Garibaldi was a fully protected species. The man claimed that he was an "experienced" angler who had been diving for 20 years, but he did not know the regulations well - he did not even have a fishing license. He was cited for the illegal take of lobster out of season, and the unlawful take of Garibaldi. The suspect later failed to appear in court and the judge issued a warrant for his arrest.

Shooting Melee in Tulare County

Tulare County Wardens Gloria Marsh and Mike Conely received information that a large group of people were lined up along the edge of an almond orchard and shooting doves prior to the opening of the season. A call to the landowner confirmed that nobody had permission to be in the orchard.

The wardens responded and approached the orchard from either side. Warden Conely was the first to arrive and observed approximately 10 people with guns. When they saw Conely, many of them began to run to the west in the general direction of Warden Marsh. When the fleeing poachers saw Marsh, they abruptly changed direction and ran north. Marsh subsequently located five men hunting in an adjacent alfalfa field. All were ordered to stop hunting and unload their shotguns. While Marsh was dealing with her group, Conely was trying to handle another large group who had fled the orchard and were now at their vehicles.

Marsh walked her group to Conely's location and the two officers began interviewing the people involved. One of the subjects told the wardens that they had permission to hunt the orchard and the alfalfa field and that they were not shooting at doves, they were simply killing crows for the farmer. He then admitted that one of them "might have accidentally shot a dove." A search of the immediate area revealed no dead crows but did turn up numerous piles of dove feathers and hundreds of expended shotgun shells. When asked about the subjects that had fled the area, they refused to give any information.

Conely then went back into the orchard and located two more suspects. He also found a loaded shotgun leaning against a tree and a bag containing several doves. The two men were brought back to the main group. After securing the firearms and collecting numerous dead doves from the orchard and from the poachers' backpacks and cars, the wardens began issuing citations. Eleven

people were cited for charges including hunter trespass, take of dove out of season, and failure to show game or equipment upon demand of a warden.

Multiple Witnesses Help Bust an Abalone Poacher

Two visitors to San Francisco saw something they were sure was illegal. The pair observed a man selling abalone from the back of his vehicle. Later, when they returned home, they called DFG and reported their observations along with the license number of the vehicle they had seen. The DFG's Special Operations Unit (SOU) was quickly able to determine the registered owner of the vehicle. The SOU officer assigned to the case then gathered information regarding the man's physical description, and his residence address. They were missing one piece of information - where did the poacher obtain his illegal merchandise?

More than 150 miles away, a north coast commercial sea urchin diver found numerous fresh abalone shells on the ocean floor. This information was passed along to the local game warden. Further information from local fishermen led wardens to a possible suspect - the San Francisco abalone peddler.

The SOU now had what they needed: a full description of the suspect *and* the location where illegal collection of abalone was occurring. SOU wardens caught up with the man, who just happened to have 63 abalone in his possession (the legal limit of abalone is three per person). The man was tried and convicted in the Mendocino County Court. He was fined \$15,000 and sentenced to a year in the county jail. His commercial and sport fishing license privileges were permanently revoked. 🐻

Lt. Liz Schwall heads the CalTIP program.